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man, and fond pretender to wit. Do not the learned in the law display their judgment and eloquence, and successfully plead the cause of their client, by the multitude of statutes, precedents, and authorities, which they are able to quote. The editor of a provincial print, with his neat little *plagiatic* scissors, clips a scrap from this, and that newspaper, or other periodical publication; and thus furnishes materials to fill the columns of his own gazette.

The day and the night, morning and evening, the sun, moon, and stars, the seasons, the sea, the shore, the sky, the clouds, the storm and tempest, the battle and war, have been subjects of poetic description, from age to age, since the earliest times, with much sameness of ideas and similarity of manner. What modern poet, of talent and celebrity, has not copied from Ovid, and Virgil, Horace, and Homer? While poetsasters, incapable of plagiarising from classic originals, are content to follow inferior masters.

If what has been said be true, plagiarism and want of originality are no peculiarities in composition. If they are faults, like many other human foibles, they are common. The critic may allege that prevalence of error is a bad apology for its indulgence: a multitude of thieves will not justify dishonesty. True. But why should one poor plagiarist be singled out from the crowd, and the hue and cry of catch the thief be raised against him; while many of his contemporaries and predecessors, more or less chargeable with the same crime, have been allowed to wear the laurel, and compliment themselves with all the honours of invention, originality, and genius?

S.E.

Ballynahinch.

For the Belfast Monthly Magazine.

THE ANSWER OF JOHN MILTON TO THE REPRESENTATION OF THE PRESBYTERY OF BELFAST, PUBLISHED AT PAGE 95 OF OUR LAST NUMBER.

WE have now to deal, though in the same country, with another sort of adversaries, in show far different, in substance much what the same. These write themselves the Presbytery of Belfast, a place better known by the name of a late barony, than by the fame of these men's doctrine or ecclesiastical deeds; whose obscurity till now never came to our hearing. And surely we should think this their representment far beneath considerable, who have neglected and passed over the like unadvisedness of their fellows in other places more near us, were it not to observe in some particulars the sympathy, good intelligence, and joint pace which they go in the North of Ireland, with their copartening rebels in the South, driving on the same interest to lose us that Kingdom, that they may gain it themselves, or at least share in the spoil: though the other be open enemies, these pretended brethren.

The introduction of their manifest out of doubt must be zealous; "their duty," they say, "to God and his people, over whom he hath made them overseers, and for whom they must give account." What mean these men? Is the Presbytery of Belfast, a small town in Ulster, of so large extent that their voices cannot serve to teach duties in the congregation which they oversee, without spreading and divulging to all parts far beyond the diocese of Patrick or Columba, their written representation, under the subtle pretence of feeding their own flock? Or do they think to oversee or undertake

to give an account for all to whom their paper sends greeting? St. Paul to the elders of Ephesus thinks it sufficient to give charge, "that they take heed to themselves, and to the flock," over which they were made overseers; beyond those bounds he enlarges not their commission. And surely when we put down Bishops, and put up Presbyters, which the most of them have made use of to enrich and exalt themselves, and turn the first heel against their benefactors, we did not think that one classic fraternity so obscure and so remote, should involve us, and all state-affairs, within the censure and jurisdiction of Belfast, upon pretence of overseeing their own charge.

We very well know that church-censures are limited to church-matters, and these within the compass of their own province, or to say more truly of their own congregation; that affairs of state are not for their meddling, as we could urge even from their own invectives and protestations against the Bishops, wherein they tell them with much fervency, that ministers of the gospel, neither by that by function, nor any other which they ought accept, have the least warrant to be pragmatical in the state.

And surely in vain were Bishops for these and other causes forbid to sit and vote in the House, if these men out of the House, and without vote shall claim and be permitted more license on their Presbyterial stools, to breed continual disturbance by interposing in the commonwealth. But seeing that now, since their heaving out the prelates to heave in themselves, they devise new ways to bring both ends together which will never meet; that is to say, their former doctrine with their present doings, as "that they cannot else teach magistrates and subjects their duty, and that they have besides a right

themselves to speak as members of the commonwealth." Let them know that there is a wide difference between the general exhortation to justice and obedience, which in this point is the utmost of their duty, and the state-disputes wherein they are now grown such busy bodies, to preach of titles, interests, and alterations in government; more than our Saviour himself, or any of his Apostles ever took upon them, though the title both of Cæsar and of Herod, and what they did in matters of state, might have then admitted controversy enough.

Next, for their civil capacities, we are sure that pulpits and church-assemblies, whether classical or provincial, never were intended or allowed by wise magistrates, nor by him that sent them, to advance such purposes, but that as members of the commonwealth they ought to mix with other commoners, and in that temporal body to assume nothing above other private persons, or otherwise than in an usual and legal manner: not by distinct remonstrances and representations, as if they were a tribe and party by themselves, which is the next immediate way to make the church lift a horn against the state, and claim an absolute and undepending jurisdiction, as from like advantage and occasion (to the trouble of all Christendom,) the Pope hath for many ages done; and not only our Bishops were climbing after him, but our Presbyters also, as by late experiment we find. Of this representation therefore, we can esteem and judge no other than of a slanderous and seditious libel, sent abroad by a sort of incendiaries, to delude and make the better way under the cunning and plausible name of a Presbytery.

A second reason of their representing is, "that they consider the dependance of that Kingdom upon

England," which is another shameless untruth that ever they considered; as their own actions will declare, by conniving, and in their silence partaking with those in Ulster, whose obedience by what we have yet heard, stands dubious, and with an eye of conformity rather to the north, than to that part where they owe their subjection; and this in all likelihood by the inducement and instigation of these representers, who are so far from considering their dependance on England, as to presume at every word to term proceedings of Parliament, "the insolencies of a sectarian party, and of private men." Despising dominion, and speaking evil of dignities, which hypocritically they would seem to dissuade others from; and not fearing the due correction of their superiors, that may in fit season overtake them. When as the least consideration of their dependance on England would have kept them better in their duty.

The third reason which they use, makes against them: The remembrance how God punished the contempt of their warning last year upon the breakers of covenant; whereas the next year after they forgot the warning of that punishment hanging over their own heads for the very same transgression, their manifest breach of covenant by this seditious representation, accompanied with the doubtful obedience of that province which represents it.

And thus we have their preface supported with three reasons; two of them notorious falsities, and the third against themselves; and two examples, the Province of London, and the Commissioners of the Kirk Assembly. But certainly, if canonical examples bind not, much less do apocryphal.

Proceeding to avouch the trust put upon them by God, which is plainly proved to be none of this

nature, "They would not be looked upon as sowers of sedition, or authors of divisive motions;" their record, they say, is in Heaven, and their truth and honesty no man knows where. For is not this a shameless hypocrisy, and of mere wolves in sheep's cloathing, to sow sedition in the ears of all men, and to face us down in the very act, that they are authors of no such matter? But let the sequel both of their paper, and the obedience of the place wherein they are, determine.

Nay, while we are yet writing these things, and foretelling all men the rebellion which was even then designed in the close purpose of these unhallowed priestlings, at the very time when with their lips they disclaimed all sowing of sedition, news is brought, and too true, that the Scottish inhabitants of that province are actually revolted, and have not only besieged in Londonderry those forces which were to have fought against Ormond, and the Irish rebels; but have in a manner declared with them, and begun open war against the Parliament; and all this by the incitement and illusions of that unchristian synagogue at Belfast, who yet dare charge the Parliament, that "notwithstanding specious pretences, yet their actings do evidence, that they love a rough garment to deceive." The deceit we own not, but the comparison, by what at first sight may seem alluded, we except: for that hairy roughness assumed won Jacob the birthright, both temporal and eternal; and God, we trust, hath so disposed the mouth of these Balaams, that coming to curse, they have stumbled into a kind of blessing, and compared our actings to the faithful act of that patriarch.

But if they mean, as more probably their meaning was, that rough garment spoken of by Zach. 13—4, we

may then behold the pityful store of learning and theology, which these deceivers have thought sufficient to uphold their credit with the people, who, though the rancour that leavens them, have somewhat quickened the common drawling of their pulpit elocution, yet for want of stock enough in Scripture phrase, to serve the necessary uses of their malice, they are become so libelal, as to part freely with their own budge-gowns from off their backs, and bestow them on the magistrate as a *rough garment* to deceive; rather than, not be furnished with a reproach, though never so improper, never so obvious to be turned upon themselves. For but with but half an eye cast upon that text, any man will soon discern that *rough garment* to be their own coat, their own livery, the very badge and cognizance of such false prophets as themselves. Who, when they understand, or even seriously mind the beginning of that 4th verse, may "be ashamed every one of his lying vision," and may justly fear that foregoing denouncement to such "as speak lies in the name of the Lord," verse 3, lurking under the *rough garment* of outward rigour and formality, whereby they cheat the simple. So that *this rough garment to deceive* we bring you once again, grave Sirs, into your own vestry; or, with Zachary, shall not think much to fit it to your own shoulders. To bestow aught in good earnest on the magistrate, we know your classic priesthood is to grapple, for ye are always begging: and for this rough gown to deceive, we are confident ye cannot spare it; it is your Sunday's gown, your every day gown, your only gown, the gown of your faculty; your divining gown; to take it from you were sacrilege. Wear it, therefore, and possess it yourselves, most grave and reverend Carmelites, that all men both young

and old, as we hope they will shortly, may yet better know ye, and distinguish ye by it; and give to your rough gown, wherever they meet it, whether in pulpit, classes, or provincial Synod, the precedence and the pre-eminence of deceiving.

They charge us next, that we have broken the covenant, and loaded it with slighting reproaches. For the reproaching, let them answer that are guilty, whereof the state, we are sure, cannot be accused. For the breaking, let us hear wherein. "In labouring," say they, "to establish by law a universal toleration of all religions." This touches not the state; for certainly were they so minded, they need not labour it, but do it, having power in their hands; and we know of no act, as yet, past to that purpose. But suppose it done, wherein is the covenant broken? The covenant enjoins us to endeavour the extirpation first of Popery and prelacy, then of heresy, schism, and profaneness, and whatsoever shall be found contrary to sound doctrine, and the power of Godliness. And this we cease not to do by all effectual and proper means: but these divines might know, that to extirpate all these things can be no work of the civil sword, but of the spiritual, which is the word of God.

No man well in his wits, endeavouring to root up weeds out of his ground, instead of using a spade, will take a mallet or a beetle. Nor doth the covenant any way engage us to extirpate, or to prosecute the men, but the heresies and errors in them, which we tell these divines, and the rest that understand not, belongs chiefly to their own function, in the diligent preaching and insisting upon sound doctrine, in the confuting, not the railing down errors, encountering both in public and private conference, and by the power

of truth, not of persecution, adding those authors of heretical opinions, and lastly in the spiritual execution of Church discipline within their own congregations. In all these ways we shall assist them, favour them, and as far as appertains to us, join with them, and moreover, not tolerate the free exercise of any religion, which shall be found absolutely contrary to sound doctrine, or the power of Godliness;* for the conscience, we must have patience till it be within our verge. And thus doing, we shall believe to have kept exactly all that is required from us by the covenant. Whilst they, by their seditious practices against us, than which nothing for the present can add more assistance

or advantage to those bloody rebels and papists in the South, will be found most pernicious covenant-breakers themselves, and as deep in that guilt as those of their own nation the last year; the warning of whose ill success, like men hardened for the same judgment, they miserably pervert to an encouragement in the same offence, if not a far worse: for now they have joined interest with the Irish rebels, who have ever fought against the covenant, whereas their countrymen the year before made the covenant their plea. But as it is a peculiar mercy of God to his people, while they remain his, to preserve them from wicked confederations: so it is a mark and punishment of hypocrites to be driven at length to mix their cause, and the interest of their covenant with God's enemies.

* Such was the state of twilight of this period, that even John Milton very imperfectly understood the doctrine of religious liberty. Even now, the morning light is only breaking; we have not yet full clear day. Let us hope, however, that the dark clouds which at present shade our horizon, will speedily clear up. Let us contrast John Milton, with a luminary of the present day.

"Toleration, without allowing any capability of enjoying civil power, is to permit a man to live indeed, but to render life a burden, by tying his hands and feet; it is setting upon him a mark of jealousy, if not of disgrace, and bidding him to wear his badge of humiliation in the face of his neighbours.

"Toleration, properly so called, as that word, in its most extensive and liberal sense, imports, is infinitely short of the true Christian principle; that no Christian should hold his Christian liberty at the will of another. The term, therefore, though it has long passed as of sterling value, is, in truth, of very questionable authority, and of very suspicious tendency. It expresses the dependence of one man upon another, to do a particular act, in which that other has no right to interfere, directly or indirectly, by compulsion or seduction." [Dr. Disney's *Remarks on the Bishop of Lincoln's Charge.*]

B.M.M.

And whereas they affirm that the tolerating of all religions in the manner that we tolerate them, is an innovation; we must acquaint them that we are able to make it good, if need be, both by Scripture and the primitive fathers, and the frequent assertion of whole churches and Protestant states in their remonstrances and exhortations against the Popish tyranny over souls. And what force of argument do these doctors bring to the contrary? But we have long observed to what pass the bold ignorance and sloth of our clergy tends no less now than in the Bishops days, to make their bare sayings and censures authentic with the people, though destitute of any proof or argument. But thanks be to God they are discerned.

Their next impeachment is, "that we oppose the Presbyterian government, the hedge and bulwark of religion." Which all the land knows to be a most impudent falsehood, having established it with all freedom, wherever it hath been desired,

Nevertheless as we perceive it aspiring to be a compulsive power upon all, without exception in parochial, classical, and provincial hierarchies, or to require the fleshly arm of magistracy in the execution of a spiritual discipline, to punish and amerce by any corporal infliction those whose consciences cannot be edified by what authority they are compelled, we hold it no more to be "the hedge and bulwark of religion," than the Popish and Prelatical courts, or the Spanish Inquisition.

But we are told, "we embrace Paganism and Judaism in the arms of toleration." A most audacious calumny! And yet while we detest Judaism, we know ourselves commanded by St. Paul, Rom. 11. to respect the Jews, and by all means to endeavour their conversion.

Neither was it ever sworn in the covenant to maintain an universal Presbytery in England, as they falsely allege, but in Scotland against the common enemy, if our aid were called for: being left free to reform our own country according to the word of God, and the example of best reformed churches; from which rule we are not yet departed.

But here, utterly forgetting to be ministers of the Gospel, they presume to open their mouths, not in the spirit of meekness, as like dissemblers, they pretend, but with as much devilish malice, impudence, and falsehood, as any Irish rebel could have uttered; and from a barbarous nook of Ireland, brand us with the extirpation of laws and liberties; things which they seem as little to understand, as aught that belongs to good letters or humanity.

"That we seized on the person of the King;" who was surrendered into our hands an enemy and captive, by our own subordinate and paid army of Scots in England. Next, "our imprisoning many mem-

bers of the house." As if it were impossible they should deserve it, conspiring and bandying against the public good: which to the other part appearing, and, with the power they had, not resisting, had been a manifest desertion of their trust and duty. No question but it is as good and necessary to expel rotten members out of the house, as to banish delinquents out of the land: and the reason holds as well in forty as in five. And if they be yet more, the more dangerous is their number. They had no privilege to sit there, and vote home the author, the impenitent author of all our miseries to freedom, honour, and royalty, for a few fraudulent, if not destructive, concessions. Which that they went about to do, how much more clear it was to all men, so much the more expedient, and important to the commonwealth was their speedy seizure and exclusion; and no breach of any just privilege, but a breach of their knotted faction. And here they cry out, "An action without parallel in any age." So heartily we wish all men were unprejudiced in all our actions, as these illiterate denouncers never paralleled so much of any age as would contribute to the tithe of a century. "That we abolish Parliamentary power, and establish a Representative instead thereof." Now we have the height of them, these profound instructors, in the midst of their Representation, would know the English of a Representative, and were perhaps of that classis, who heretofore were as much staggered at Triennial.

Their grand accusation is our justice done on the King, which that they may prove to be "without rule or example," they venture all the credit they have in divine and human history; and by the same desperate boldness, detect themselves to be egregious liars and impostors,

seeking to abuse the multitude with a show of that gravity and learning which never was their portion. Had their knowledge been equal to the knowledge of any stupid monk, or abbot, they would have known at least, though ignorant of all things else, the life and acts of him, who first instituted their order. But these blockish Presbyters of Clondeboy, know not that John Knox, who was the first founder of Presbytery in Scotland, taught professedly the doctrine of deposing, and of killing Kings. And thus while they deny that any such rule can be found, the rule is found in their own country, given them by their own first Presbyterian institutor; and they themselves, like irregular friars walking contrary to the rule of their own foundation, deserve, for so gross an ignorance and transgression, to be disciplined upon their own stools. Or had their reading in history been any, which by this we may be confident is none at all, or their malice not heightened to a blind rage, they never would so rashly have thrown the dice to a palpable discovery of their ignorance and want of shame. But wherefore spend we two such precious things as time and reason upon priests, the most prodigal mis-spenders of time, and the scarcest owners of reason? It is sufficient we have published our defences, given reasons, given examples of our justice done; books also have been written to the same purpose for men to look on that will; that no nation under Heaven but in one age or other hath done the like. The difference only is, which rather seems to us matter of glory, that they, for the most part, have, without form of law, done the deed by a kind martial justice, we by the deliberate and well-weighed sentence of a legal judicature.

But they tell us, "It was against the interest and protestation of the
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kingdom of Scotland. And did exceedingly well to join those two together: hereby informing us what credit or regard need be given in England to a Scotch protestation, ushered in by a Scotch interest: certainly no more than we see is given in Scotland to an English declaration, declaring the interest of England. If then our interest move not them, why should theirs move us? If they say, we are not all England; we reply, they are not all Scotland: nay, were the last year so inconsiderable a part of Scotland, as were beholding to this which they now term the sectarian army, to defend and rescue them at the charges of England, from a stronger party of their own countrymen, in whose esteem they were no better than sectarians themselves. But they add, "It was against the former declarations of both kingdoms," to seize or proceed against the King. We are certain, that no such declarations of both kingdoms, as derive not their full force from the sense and meaning of the covenant, can be produced.

And if they plead against us the covenant, "To preserve and defend his person;" we ask them briefly, whether they take the covenant to be absolute or conditional? If absolute, then suppose the King to have committed all prodigious crimes and impieties against God, or nature, or whole nations, he must nevertheless be sacred from all violent touch. Which absurd opinion, how can it live in any man's reason, either natural or rectified, we much marvel. Since God declared his anger as impetuous for the saving of King Benhadid, though surrendering himself at mercy, as for the killing of Naboth. If it be conditional, in the preservation and defence of religion, and the people's liberty, then certainly to take away his life, being
E e

dangerous, and pernicious to both these, was no more a breach of the covenant, than for the same reason at Edinburgh to behead Gordon, the Marquis Huntley. By the same covenant, we made vow to assist and defend all those that should enter with us into this league; not absolutely, but in the maintenance and pursuing thereof. If therefore no man else ever were so mad, as to claim from hence an impunity from all justice, why should any for the King? whose life, by other articles of the same covenant, was forfeit. Nay, if common sense had not led us to such a clear interpretation, the Scotch commissioners themselves might boast to have been our first teachers: who, when they drew to the malignance which brought forth that perfidious last year's irruption against all the bands of covenant, or christian neighbourhood, making their hollow plea the defence of his Majesty's person, they were constrained, by their own guiltiness, to leave out that following morsel, that would have choked them, the "preservation and defence of true religion, and our liberties." And questionless in the preservation of these, we are bound as well, both by the covenant, and before the covenant, to preserve and defend the person of any private man, and the person and authority of any inferior magistrate. So that this article, objected with such vehemence against us, contains not an exception of the King's person, and authority, to do by privilege what wickedness he list, and be defended, as some fancy, but an express testification of our loyalty; and the plain words, without wresting, will bear as much, that we had no thoughts against his person, or just power, provided they might consist with the preservation and defence of true religion, and our liberties. But to these how

hazardous his life was, will be needless to repeat so often. It may suffice, that while he was in custody, where we expected his repentance, his remorse at last, and compassion of all the innocent blood shed already, and hereafter likely to be shed for his mere wilfulness, he made no other use of our continual forbearance, our humblest petitions and obtestations at his feet, but to sit contriving and fomenting new plots against us, and as his own phrase was, playing his own game upon the miseries of his people: of which we desire no other view at present, than these articles of peace with the rebels, and the rare game likely to ensue from such a cast of his cards. And then let men reflect a little upon the slanders and reviles of these wretched priests, and judge what modesty, what truth, what conscience, what any thing fit for ministers, or we might say reasonable men, can harbour in them. For what they began in shamelessness and malice, they conclude in frenzy, throwing out a sudden rhapsody of proverbs, quite from the purpose; and with as much comeliness as when Saul prophesied. For casting off, as he did his garments, all modesty and meekness wherewith the language of ministers ought to be clothed, speaking especially to their supreme magistrate, they talk at random, of servants reigning, servants riding, and wonder how the earth can bear them. Either these men imagine themselves to be marvellously high set and exalted in the chair of Belfast, to vouchsafe the Parliament of England no better style than servants, or else their high notion, which we rather believe falls as low as court parasitism, supposing all men to be servants, but the King. And then all their pains taken to seem so wise in proverbial, serves but to conclude them downright slaves; and the

edge of their own proverb falls reverse upon themselves. For as "delight is not seemly for fools," much less high words to come from base minds. What they are for ministers, or how they crept into the fold, whether at the window, or through the wall, or who set them there so haughty in the pontifical see of Belfast, we know not. But this we rather have cause to wonder, if the earth can bear this unsufferable insolency of upstarts, who from a ground, which is not their own, dare send such defiance to the sovereign Magistracy of England, by whose authority, and in whose right they inhabit there. By their actions, we might rather judge them to be a generation of highland thieves and red-shanks, who being neighbourly admitted, not as the Saxons by merit of their warfare against our enemies, but by the courtesy of England, to hold possessions in our province, a country better than their own, have, with worse faith than those Heathens, proved ungrateful and treacherous guests to their best friends and entertainers. And let them take heed, lest while their silence, as to these matters, might have kept them blameless and secure under those proceedings which they so feared to partake in, that these their treasonable attempts and practices have not involved them in a far worse guilt of rebellion; and (notwithstanding that fair dehortatory from joining with malignant) in the appearance of a co-interest and partaking with the Irish rebels. Against whom, though by themselves pronounced to be the enemies of God, they go not out to battle, as they ought, but rather by these their doings, assist and become associates.*

* For the opinions advanced in this letter, we do not consider ourselves re-

For the Belfast Monthly Magazine.

H. IN ANSWER TO X.

(See *Magazine for Oct. last*, p. 267.)

THE pitched cap, the lash and the halter, unconstitutionally used by the merciless soldier, goaded on the open-hearted and hospitable Wexfordian peasant, to a cruel and barbarous retaliation. The ill-judged reproach and subsequent inattention of a "dominant faction in the Synod of Ulster," to the just claims of Dr. Dickson, provoked him to an unbounded censure on that church, which he declares to be the only one in the Kingdom with which he could conscientiously associate.

Permit me then to put it to the candour of X., whether his unqualified epithets, as well as the unfounded assertions of him and his kindred spirit who writes the "Retrospect of Politics," ought not to banish every member of the Synod of Ulster from the list of subscribers to an otherwise, in many instances, valuable Magazine.

I am far from asserting that the

sponsible; but we merely give it as a literary curiosity, coming from the pen of the great John Milton. Still less do we defend the coarse language he uses. But such was the manner of the times. It is matter of rejoicing that we live in more polished and enlightened times, when even the language of controversy is, with only a few exceptions, softened down, and if gentleness does not reign, at least politeness rubs off many asperities. To what preceding age of the world would a reflecting man have given the preference to have existed in, rather than to the present? Even although the present age has many glaring defects, and vices, still we are in a progressive state, and it is hoped a better age will succeed. Philosophers, unlike poets, place their golden age in a future era of the world.

B.M.M.